

## Demographic and Economic Contexts

Dataset Source	Description	Characteristics	Limitations
<p>U.S. Census American Community Survey</p> <p>Web address: <a href="http://www.census.gov">http://www.census.gov</a></p>	<p>Census takers are surveying small samples of the population to get the most recent estimates possible; these typically cover averages over three- or five-year time spans.</p> <p>These intermediate surveys are called the American Community Survey; although they involve more limited sampling than the ten-year census, they allow more rapid assessment of trends.</p>	<p><b><u>Unique feature:</u></b> Based on very close sampling of American households at all income levels and in all states. The Census provides thorough data sets covering poverty.</p> <p><b><u>Comprehensiveness:</u></b> Very comprehensive. Levels: Residential blocks, census tracts, cities, counties, metro areas, Congressional districts, states, and nation.</p> <p><b><u>Accuracy:</u></b> Variable depending on the sampling method, the geography, and the specific quantity that is being measured;</p> <p><b><u>Ease of use:</u></b> Requires some training, primarily because so many data sets are available and the web site can be complicated to negotiate for the newcomer.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited information about food and farming.</li> <li>• Traditionally, the U.S. Census has been compiled every ten years during the years ending in zero. Recently, however, this has been supplemented by annual surveys, because conditions change so fast.</li> </ul>